EWC: BMW finishes season on the Le Mans podium.

BMW Motorrad France Team Thevent is second overall in the 2012 Endurance World Championship after claiming third in Le Mans – BMW successful in three categories.

Le Mans/Munich, 10th September 2012. BMW Motorrad had a successful outing at the "24 Heures Moto" at Le Mans (FRA) this weekend with BMW S 1000 RRs finishing on the podium in three different categories. In the 24 hour race marking the 2012 FIM Endurance World Championship season finale, BMW Motorrad France Team Thevent claimed a historic third place, putting a European motorcycle on the podium for the first time ever in this prestigious race. With this result the team, with riders Sébastien Gimbert, Erwan Nigon (both FRA), Damian Cudlin (AUS) and Hugo Marchand (FRA), ended the season second in the overall EWC classification for the second year in succession.

The BMW Motorrad HP RaceSupport backed squad arrived at Le Mans trailing the championship leaders by 19 points and well aware that a win was required in the 35th running of the "24 Heures Moto" if they were to stand even the slimmest chance of wresting the world title away from SERT in the final hour. The weekend started well, with Gimbert, Cudlin and Nigon securing pole position for the second time in as many years aboard the #99 BMW S 1000 RR. However, after a solid opening stint by Cudlin, a low speed crash for Gimbert less than two hours into the race left the team chasing a gap to the leaders that, ultimately, proved impossible to close.

As Kawasaki and SERT, the two leading teams, battled it out at the front of the field, the BMW Motorrad France riders focused on making up places with each stint, eventually moving up to third place just before the sun appeared across the Bugatti circuit in the morning. They then defended against a concerted challenge from Yamaha GMT94 for the final place on the podium. In the closing stages the pace and consistency that has been evident all weekend paid dividends, with the #99 RR pulling a gap on the pursuers before taking the chequered flag in third place.

"If you'd offered me a podium finish at Le Mans when we started this project then I'd have happily taken it," says Team Principal Michael Bartholemy. "But we've come a long way since the start, establishing ourselves as one of the main contenders for the championship, and our expectations have increased as a result. Finishing on the podium in the biggest race of the season is an achievement, but we came here to fight for the championship and, once again, we stumbled at the final hurdle. I couldn't have asked any more of the team. They did a fantastic job here this weekend, as they have done at every race this season. I'd like to say a big thank you to BMW Motorrad France, to Michelin and to my co-principals, Volker Scheck and Jeff Souren, without whom none of this would have been possible. Congratulations to SRC Kawasaki for the win and to SERT for once again winning the championship. Will we be back next year to try again to beat them? You'd better believe it!"

"I'm pleased to be on the podium, but obviously we wanted to win the race and the championship. However, the guys who beat us here did so fair and square, so it's down to us to up our game just a little more," Cudlin comments. "We've come second in the championship twice now, which is pretty good for a new team. With a bit of work in the off-

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season, and the same level of support we have now, there's no reason why we shouldn't challenge for the championship again next year."

"We finished third, putting a European bike on the podium at Le Mans for the first time in its 35 year history in the process, so I'm pretty happy with that," Nigon reports. "It wasn't an easy race. A lot of riders crashed, a lot of bikes broke and the conditions were quite difficult, but we still finished on the podium, which is good but our first objective was the title and we're second again, which is not quite as good. However, it shows our potential and it makes me even more motivated to come back next year to fight for the title once again, only this time even harder."

"I'm happy to be on the podium here at Le Mans, but also a little disappointed not to have been able to fight for the win and the championship this weekend," Gimbert admits. "I was pushing hard to catch the Kawasaki and Suzuki on my first relay, but then I lost the front after passing a slower rider. We've been second in the championship for two years now, so there is only one way for us to go next season."

BMW celebrated title honours in the FIM World Endurance Superstock-Cup, with the Penz13.com Kraftwerk Herpigny Racing Team being crowned 2012 champions. Riders Arie Vos (NED), Pedro Vallcaneras (ESP) and Jason Pridmore (USA) finished the 24-hour-race in second on the podium thus, the Rico Penzkofer team secured the first ever world cup title for the RR. In the final FIM Sidecar World Championship race, BMW duo Jörg Steinhausen (GER) and Gregory Cluze (FRA) finished second, securing second overall in this championship.

"For me it's been a day of mixed feelings," says Marcel Driessen, Director BMW Motorrad France. "We came to Le Mans with the conviction that we could win and maybe even come away with a world championship title too, but our hopes were dashed with the crash early in the race. But the team and the riders didn't let their heads drop and fought back to secure a podium in the biggest race of the year. Our BMW S 1000 RR is also the first European motorcycle to finish on the podium in the '24 Heures Moto' at Le Mans, and that makes me very proud. In fact, this weekend has been a very successful one for BMW. Team Penz13.com Kraftwerk Racing were crowned Superstock World Cup Champions, while Jörg Steinhausen and Gregory Cluze took their RR powered outfit to second place in the Sidecar World Championship. A very good weekend indeed."

"It was a very successful weekend for our teams", comments Berthold Hauser, Head of BMW Motorrad HP RaceSupport. "We knew before the race that it would be a difficult task to claim the title in the Endurance World Championship. The BMW Motorrad France Team Thevent did a great job once more and the riders rode an impressive race. Everybody was fighting to win the race and the title, and they could count on our full support. Our competitors put in a great performance without making errors, so congratulations to SERT for winning the title. Anyway, our squad worked brilliantly over the whole season which was only its second year in this series. Being second overall on both years of competing in this championship is a great effort. In the other categories, the good cooperation of HP RaceSupport and the teams was rewarded with success with winning the title in the Superstock World Cup and the second overall in the Sidecar World Championship. We only can be happy with these results."

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